ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW #463-1

with

Agnes Eun Soon Rho Chun (AC)

October 28, 1992

Nu`uanu, Honolulu, O`ahu

BY: Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Agnes Eun Soon Rho Chun at her home in Nu`uanu, O`ahu, Hawai`i, on October 28, 1992. The interviewer is Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

Okay. I guess we can start today's interview by having you talk about your parents, and the first question I have about your parents, Hee Chang Rho and Young Hee Chi Rho, is where did your parents originally come from?

AC: My parents came from Ong Jin in Hwanghae-do, Korea. My dad and mother [*Hee Chang Rho and Young Hee Chi Rho*] were married there and they had three children. Eventually their children all died when they were infants. My father, I believe (it) was in 1903, had a very good friend (whose) name was Mr. Lee, Hong Kee—Mr. Lee being the last name. And from what my mother tells us, he had planned to (emigrate) to Hawai`i, and in the process, talked my father into coming. My father (read and wrote) Chinese characters (so he must have had extensive schooling in Korea). I don't know whether they had a very difficult time in Korea concerning livelihood. My mother just said he upped and decided that he'd come with his friend. My mother found out from friends that he had left. My mother was living close to her sister, and so she stayed with her sister. My dad came out here, worked in the plantations, someplace in Kaua`i. Eventually (after a ten-year separation), when he came (to Honolulu), he (asked) my mother (to join him). (She arrived) here in (1912) and (so) had never (experienced) the plantation (life). (I only recall her saying that they lived) in the Palama area, close to Akepo Lane. (Therefore, she) never had the experiences that many of the Korean women had, like (working in) the kitchens at the (plantation) camp (cooking for the men and doing their laundry). My mother said she had an (upstairs) apartment in the Palama area (and that) things (were) so cheap at that time. Before (my father) went to work, (he would go) downstairs (to) the coffee shop/bakery and buy coffee for five cents a pot. (He also bought) pancakes and bread. So my mother (was quite comfortable at that time).

(However), my father got ill, and then was unable to work, so that's (when we) felt our hardship. (Before his illness, he was) working at the pineapple cannery (and) was in charge of (a group of men on contract) stacking (cans of pineapple and he was also a watchman). (As the lead person of the men, my mother tells us of how my father divided the money amongst the workers but considered the way he did it as stupid.) He would divide (the pay) amongst (the workers including) himself (and for example) if he (had) three pennies (left for six of them) he (would) not keep the pennies (but would) buy (box) matches, two for a penny, or whatever, (and he) would just divide it evenly. My mother said she thought it was so ridiculous for him to

feel like that, but that character shows up later on (in his other ventures). My father had very good hands, able to repair things and do things. (He made a) Korean chess (set which were) little wooden blocks with the (Chinese) characters on it. (He carved the characters on the blocks. Mother remembers the raves he received from his friends. He was a handyman.) He was so good at (doing) all kinds of things, (and repairing of things that) this friend of his one day told him, "You're so good with your hands. Let's go into a secondhand business. I'll be the one going around with my cart to pick up things (and) you fix (them)."

(They formed a business but) eventually they broke up (because of my father's honesty). My mother (tells about the used) charcoal stove (his partner bought for) fifty cents. My father (did such a good refurbishing job his partner said), "Let's sell it for $4.50."

(But) my father (would not go along with it saying), "How can you do that? You're selling it way over (the price you paid)."

That was one of the incidents I can remember my mother telling me. So eventually they broke up because the (partner) insisted on marking up the goods way over what my father thought was fair. But my mother again told me (that's how my father was). She says, "If the item was so good and was sellable (for the higher price), why (did he) get involved in that kind of (argument)?"

But eventually that's how it turned out. And I recall he did a lot of things. I remember he even made me pajamas. He was really good at a lot of things. I think, that's (how) my brother picked up (the trait)—in fact, my two brothers were always able to do things [with their hands]. My sister (Flora) eventually went into tailoring. When my father got ill, my mother at that time said that she didn't want to go on welfare, so she had my brother (Chong Hun) leave school when he was a junior, and my sister (Flora, when she was) in the eighth grade. She was (the third) in the family. My (second) brother graduated from high school. My sister, Violet, (the fourth in the family) finished two years at the university. When the war broke out, I was only sixteen (and a junior in high school).

MK: You know, backing up a little bit, you know, you mentioned that your father worked on a plantation on Kaua`i. Did you ever hear in conversations with your mother where on Kaua`i he worked and what type of work he did on the plantation?

AC: No, she never mentioned it. Probably because she never knew. All she could remember was that (he) was on Kaua`i. (His friend, Mr. Hong Kee Lee settled on Kaua`i and moved to Honolulu in the thirties.)

MK: And in terms of your mother's background, I was wondering, because she lived a really long time, into her (nineties), and lived with you, you probably had more opportunities to talk with her about her past. What do you know about your mother's family background and her life in Korea?

AC: I understand that she had one sister (and) a brother also. But I heard (more) of her sister (who) had three sons. (Before the Korean War in June) 1950, Korea was divided with the 38th parallel (running) above the state (of) Hwanghae-do (making it a part of South Korea). (Then after the war, the 38th parallel was re-drawn and Hwanghae-do came under North Korea.) What had happened was that in 1955, the Korean government, through Dr. Syngman Rhee—Dr. Syngman Rhee was here in Hawai`i many years and he had a lot of help from the local Koreans toward

that independence movement. So in the meantime, my mother was one of the staunch backers of Dr. Rhee. So in '55, over fifty of the Koreans who were very staunch backers of Dr. Rhee (were selected) for a trip to Korea (sponsored by the president, the Korean Airlines and others). And so my mother went (back to Korea for the first time since her departure in 1912). In fact, in 1950, she had wanted to go to Korea and was making preparations with some other ladies (to leave on June 30). We had a friend and his wife who left (earlier that month) and they (all planned to meet in Seoul).

(However, the Korean War, which started on) June 25, 1950, (prevented my mother from making) the trip. My mother had always talked to us about how good Korea was. (She complained about) the adobe soil in Hawai`i, saying that) when you (get mud on your shoes), it just sticks. (However, Korean soil never sticks. You can just brush it off.) (She also compared the Bartlett) pears that we have here (as being) so tasteless (compared to the Korean pears). She always wanted to go to Korea. (She was happy when the) opportunity in 1955 came along and she was selected. They (were treated as VIP [*very important person*] guests). One day, they were on the bus waiting to (go out when) this bus driver calls out, "Young Hee Chi Rho."

When my mother went out (there were) two (elderly men) standing there. (One) fellow said his name was Kang-Sung Lee, and one was Sung-Nim Lee. (She) said "I don't know who (you) are."

(They replied), "We're the sons of your sister."

(My mother) wasn't sure because she had seen them when they were very young. She was kind of skeptical so the older one said, "I'm Ka_ Dong."

(She then) knew that (he) was (her nephew). The word *ka_ dong* means, "dog doodoo."

MK: Oh my goodness.

AC: It (is) a pet name in Korea, I don't know how it evolved. And so I was told that she really believed them. And sure enough, as they were talking, all the old (memories) came (back). (They told her) what had happened when the Communists (invaded). They had property, and (the Communists) wanted a whole lot of things and wanted to take over. She [*Agnes Chun's aunt*] refused. The boys told her that (the) servants ran away at that time. But what had happened was that they buried (her) sister. (The Communists did take) over everything. The servants came down (to Seoul) and somehow they got together (with the brothers), but nobody knows (for certain) what (had) happened.

(I could also remember that she had) a brother, and he was not a very good provider. He was sort of like a playboy. Her sister (however), was well-off. (She) stayed with her sister for ten years. It was ten years that my father stayed here alone and then brought her out here.

MK: And then in terms of the socio-economic class that your mother's family was in before she left there, how would you describe it? Was it a group of—was it a farming family, a landowning family?

AC: I don't know too much about her family, but what she told us was that my father's father, that would be my grandfather—was a clerk. It's not a clerk but some kind of official in the little town that they lived. In fact, one time, she said that the Rho family had one grandson, my

father's (brother's son who was a) very smart boy. I understand he was kidnapped and was never heard from. (He was seen as a threat to those in power in the town.)

MK: And you mentioned that, like, your father was really quite well-educated. He could write Chinese characters, Korean characters. How about your mother?

AC: It was so funny, my mother was not. My mother didn't (even) know how to hold a pencil. I remember during the war my sisters and my brothers were all (out of the house), they were married. I'm the youngest in the family, my sister right above me married in July, in 1942, and then my brother, the second brother, married in January of '42. And the oldest had married earlier. The first sister married before the war. And so what happened was that (only) I was living with my mother. During the wartime, our lives were really on hold because you couldn't go out anytime in the evening (with) blackout(s). (During that time) she wanted to learn (to write). She had (already) learned to read, because she was subscribing to this Korean newspaper, *The Pacific Weekly*. She also had these little Korean (story) books and she read those. I think I even have one, and she would read it over and over. One day, (she wrote) a letter to my sister in (Oregon). She had learned how to do this, writing, during the war years. I never knew that she was practicing so hard. One day I came home and she had this letter written (in) Korean characters, (called) *hangul*. (It looked) so very childish. I started reading it and (it) was so funny. She (wrote) she had gone down to the *"Su Tow Wah."* And I said, "*Su Tow Wah?* What is *Su Tow Wah?*" In Korean I asked her, "*Su Tow Wah ga mo yo?*"

Very indignant(ly) she said, "Why, *Su Tow Wah* is store."

"Why didn't you write the Korean word for store?"

Then it dawned on her (that she was using an English word). She gave (me a) sheepish smile. Then it dawned on me, (although) she was not speaking English, (she had) pick(ed) up these little words in English. (It) was so funny. She had never gone to school and was (actually) illiterate. (Another) experience (I remember involved) my (seven–year-old) son (and) my mother (at bedtime). They would lie down and then she would (converse with him in Korean). I never knew whether they really understood (each other), but I can hear (him) answer(ing) her yes or no, or whatever (in Korean). (One day) my mother told me that, "It's really embarrassing (because) Marcus told me that you live on this earth so long, and I only lived here a short while, and you can't even speak English." And he wanted to know how come. (Laughs)

Her (formal) education was nil, but she was a very smart woman, knew how to cook real well. (She sewed well, too.) I guess in Korea, they were doing handwork. (When) she came out here, (she) learned how to sew military trou(sers)—actually khaki outfits. (Since all ready-made clothes did not always fit properly,) the military (personnel), at that time, (utilized) tailors on the base, like Fort Shafter. (The tailors would cut out) trousers, (and contracted out to women who) would sew (on a piecemeal basis) at home, so my mother was doing that.

And as young as I was, (probably no more than six, while I was living at) Lopez Lane, I remember (hand sewing) buttonholes. My mother also sewed Korean dresses. She made all of her Korean outfits and I (kept some of) her clothes. Even up until the year before she died, she was making clothes for her friends who (were then in their sixties). They asked her to make their clothes for death [*burial attire*]. She (also) made many, many quilts. (The) patchwork quilts (were of geometric designs).

MK: And so she wasn't educated in a formal sense before coming to the islands, and she got married to your father. Would you know how that marriage came about in Korea? Did she ever tell you how it became that way, that she married your father?

AC: When we were growing up, no one ever thought (of) your background, (your) roots. And I never bothered to ask her. And what little I could gather from her was (about) her brother who was a playboy. (All) she would tell me was that how much problems he gave her. They were living in this place called Ong Jin (but he) he would be in Haeju, a different town, many miles away. She told me she would walk miles (looking for him), but she never mentioned other things, and it's a sad thing that we didn't ask her.

MK: Did she ever say anything about the times that she had those three children in Korea and lost them?

AC: I think all the three children died when my father was there. (My mother said they suffered from *kyongki*, seizure or stomach disorder.) When the child sleeps, they (experience something like a seizure). They would burn the needle (to sterilize it) and would prick (the) fingers and draw blood. (This) was supposed to be one of the remedies of treating the children.

MK: And then when your father unexpectedly left Korea and came to Hawai`i, what was her reaction? Did she ever share her reaction with you?

AC: The only time she would share her reaction was when things went wrong. She would say, "I don't know why I came out."

Then I would say, "Well, why did you come out here?" (We would kid her and say), "You shouldn't have come out."

Other than that. I never really found out from her.

MK: And when it came time to make the decision to follow her husband to Hawai`i, did she ever discuss how she came to that decision?

AC: No. I don't even recall my brothers or sisters mentioning the fact that they discussed it with her. Nobody seems to know. I guess she just decided that (it would be better to be with her husband than to be dependent on her sister).

MK: And then, how did she manage to come? How did she have enough funds to come and how was it all arranged?

AC: I think during the ten years that my mother was up there, I think my father was sending her money, but I really don't know and I never even asked. They (must have been) in touch for the ten years while he was out here.

MK: And when it came time for the voyage, later on did she talk about how the voyage was, coming to Hawai`i?

AC: No, all she mentioned was she came on the ship, *Mongolia*.

MK: And when she came, did she come with other Korean women that she was acquainted with or

came to become acquainted with.

AC: No, she never mentioned that. But I don't think we had too many people coming from that area. Most of the picture brides who came out here, all came from the South Korea area.

MK: And so your father arrived in 1903. Your mother arrives in 1912 and they settled in Honolulu. By that time, your father was working for CPC [*California Packing Corporation*].

AC: The cannery.

MK: The cannery. When they settled in Honolulu, what type of neighborhood did they settle in?

AC: I think the neighborhood was a mix of Chinese and Japanese and Koreans. My mother mention(ed) that she had young lady (friends whose) children (she delivered). And in fact, there was one boy, I remember, Ernest Pai, (who was) delivered (by my mother and) lo and behold (Ernest) has (wavy) hair (like my mother). So she always says, "The boy was delivered by me, so he has my hair." My brother(s), had (wavy hair, too). My second brother is the one that had real (tight) waves. I (have wavy) hair, (but) my two sisters don't have waves. My grandson (has wavy hair, too) but his situation is that my daughter-in-law's mother also (has wavy) hair. My son (Marcus) has (wavy) hair too. So, she [*Agnes Chun's mother*] always (said that), "All the children that I delivered are very gentle and good boys."

(Laughter)

AC: I mean good children. There was another (boy named Harry Wheng, whom she) delivered, too. I remember those two because I know the boys. And she also delivered some children for (a) Korean man who had married a Spanish woman. This woman gave birth to about twenty or twenty-one children. But I think from this man alone, they had around seventeen or eighteen (children). (The family's name is) J-U-H-N.

MK: And so your mother, in essence, was like a midwife to . . .

AC: (Yes, for) the neighborhood people.

MK: Did she ever say how she learned?

AC: No, she never said how they learned.

MK: Did she do other things beyond the actual delivery?

AC: They delivered, (and) they cut the umbilical cord and then they tied it.

MK: Did she provide any care to the woman or the baby right after birth?

AC: I don't know (for sure but) they must have (since serving of the *miyo̲k* soup *(wakame)* is a tradition). That is supposed to be good for childbirth, (to) clean out the system. (I also) understand (that) after my brother was born she lost (some of) her leg strength. She could not walk, she had to go from room to room (pushing) a stool. She said she (was still able to) cook although my father helped her. She couldn't stand up, but eventually she got well.

She went through a lot of hardship, (since) my father was ill and as I recall she worked at the pineapple cannery, (too) during my early years. I faintly remember that there was a nursery at the Hawaiian Pine [*Hawaiian Pineapple Company, Ltd*.]. I was there, and it seems like there was a ramp going up, and the nursery was right next to the ramp. And then the reason I recall that is because I remember going into the cafeteria. And I think they had white stools. When we lived (in) Akepo Lane, (I remember living in a) house (painted green). Then right behind (these Akepo Lane houses where) Dillingham Boulevard is now (situated), that area was just covered with elephant grass.

Those tall, stringy-looking grass grew tall. (I remember seeing) my brother and my sister catch grasshoppers and they'd toast it and then eat the grasshoppers. And then I remember (there was a walking bridge) over that area. You'd go over (the bridge to go to the CPC [*California Packing Corporation*]) pineapple cannery. And then (there was a) ramp going up (to the Dole pineapple cannery [*Hawaiian Pineapple Company, Ltd*.]).

MK: And your mother, when she was at the pineapple cannery, what kind of work did she do?

AC: She was a trimmer.

MK: You know, at that time, I'm wondering, how much English did she know, to be able to get a job and everything?

AC: Nothing. Up until the time she passed away, she never spoke English. She (would) go to the store and converse with the Japanese ladies at the store (in few broken English words). (Most of the time) they would just (point to what they needed), *moyashi*, or whatever. I remember, when my kids were growing up, we'd have cream on the table, and then she calls it "Ku-rim." So my kids would call, say, "*Halmuni*, ku-rim," and then she would pass it over. And then, they'd be out there playing and then they'd say, "*Halmuni*, ba-ru, ba-ru," because that's the way she says, "Ball." (That's the way) they conversed.

During the wartime, when we were growing up at Pua Lane, I remember we had a wooden (icebox). First it was a small square, varnished-looking thing (with an opening on the top where) you'd put the ice (wrapped in a rice bag). (There was) a pan (under the icebox to catch the) water. We had ice delivered every morning. Then in the evening, we would take the pan (of water) out (and empty it into the *laua`e* fern) baskets (my father made). (The baskets were) hanging right alongside our porch. (Around 1940) we bought a new icebox. It was a white one, a little bigger (in) size. (I remember trying) to make Jell-O [*gelatin dessert*], but it never turned out too good because it wasn't cold enough. I was fourteen (at that time). (Sometime in 1945, we bought an electric refrigerator.)

In Pua Lane, I remember the last rent we paid there was $17.50 (per month) and that was 1950. In 1950 I moved from Pua Lane to Aupuni Street, up Kam[*ehameha*] Heights (where my son Marcus was born in 1951). At that time, we had a refrigerator, gas range. I was collecting the rent at that time. Several years before then, before the war broke out, they condemned the place. They condemned the place because they were going to build the Mayor Wright Homes. I remember the Auld family. I think it was Harry Auld (who) owned that property we were living on. There were six homes in this little (courtyard). I believe it was about 5,000 or 7,000 feet of land. (Our) neighbors were (so close that if) you open(ed) your back door (you'd be about) ten feet (apart). (There were six units which included one duplex and four cottages.) The rent for the duplexes were $16.50, and the (four) single (cottages) were $17.50. When the Hawai`i

Housing Authority took over, they asked me if I would collect the rent. I was getting ten dollars. They would give me ten dollars to collect every month's rent and take it down to the office at Hawai`i Housing (Authority). That office was in one of the buildings on King Street.

MK: So actually, you lived there for a long time.

AC: (About seventeen years.)

MK: From the time you were a small girl.

AC: I remember my father died in the middle house. We were living in the duplex, then we moved up front to the middle house, and then we moved up to the front house, you know. My father died in 1935 in that middle house.

MK: In 1935?

AC: [Nineteen] thirty-five. So I don't know how long we lived in the back house, but I remember the back house where my father was being treated (for his ailment). His stomach was (swelling) at that time. (My mother asked) this Korean man (to) come (to treat him with acupuncture). I remember climbing up (the) mango tree (and) look(ing) through the window (to watch the man stick a) gold needle (several times onto my father's stomach). I saw (a) small little peanut butter jar (with) a piece of paper in there, almost like a toilet tissue. He would light a match and immediately cover (the punctured) area. I could (see) the flesh come popping up. When we moved to the front house, my mother killed a goat in (the) yard (to get the liver). (My father) ate the liver raw with salt. (I also remember another incident) when we were living at Lopez Lane—about two streets away from Tamashiro Market. We were living downstairs (of a two-story cottage) and I remember my father being ill. That's where (my mother prepared a) black fish (over a kerosene stove). I remember a good, big-sized black fish. Looks like a carp, but I don't know what it is. She had a big pot with a little oil in it, and threw (the live fish) into the pot, covered it, and then poured water over it afterwards. (I remember seeing a) creamy(-looking stock) after it was boiled. Then he would drink that. (And at another time, my mother had someone bring her a black dog.)

MK: You were saying that your mother got a black dog . . .

AC: I understand it has to be a black dog instead of a white one. My mother put (the dog in a) rice bag, and then filled the tub and drowned him. She (then) butchered the dog and then made soup, put lot of green onions (in it). I tasted it, saw (that) meat was stringy (and had lots of) fatty oil on the top, but she (skimmed off) the oil.

(While) my father (was) at that house in Lopez Lane, (he was given) another remedy for his jaundice. (To) remove (the jaundice from his body, he was given a) honeydew melon (preparation). (They) take the (melon) stem and dry it real well and pound it into a powder. She would roll a piece of paper (in the form of a straw). (She would place some of the powder on the) tip (of the straw and blow it into his nostril). My father would (start) sneezing and I saw this yellow liquid, oil-looking liquid, drip down into a bowl. My mother said (the yellow) liquid (was so potent, it could dye a) white piece of cloth yellow (permanently). My father told her that (he would) never (take that treatment again as it was so very painful).

Those are the things that I could remember my mother (desperately trying to cure my father).

He refused to have an operation, that's the reason she tried so many home remedies. (In 1935 the surgical successes were few so) he said he would rather die than go through an operation. I was nine [*years old*] at the time, and even after he died, I could hear (his) moaning (from the pain). I remember his funeral, too. It was held at our church (located in a lane off School Street). (The church also) served as our (language school). The Korean care home (is now located at that site). I remember he had a lavender casket, velvet(een)-looking. (At) nine years old, that's what my recollection is.

MK: And that was the Korean Christian Church?

AC: (Yes, the) Korean Christian Church. We are located now on Liliha Street.

MK: And, you know, were your parents Christians in Korea, prior to coming to Hawai`i?

AC: I really don't know. I don't know whether they were Christians or not. All I remember (is that) when my mother was in Korea, the Japanese (had taken over) Korea. My mother said that there were many Japanese coming through their town. When I think about it, she never did say it, but she resented the Japanese coming over. [*Korea was subject to Japanese rule and administration, 1910–1945*.] I believe that was one of the reasons why it triggered her to come to Hawai`i. She says around 1910, "We had a lot of this disturbance with the Japanese coming through." At that time, they weren't forced to take Japanese names. And I know you're Japanese, but what happened was that when she came out here, (this anti-Japanese thinking) carried over, so she mentioned (this feeling to me) several times (as I was) growing up. Even my sister (Flora) was telling me that my mother used to get so upset when they would come home with Japanese friends. My mother says, "Don't associate with them."

(Remember the) Japanese slippers? She was (very) much against us wearing (those). When I was teenager (we had) Japanese neighbors, (the) Fukudas, and I always wanted to buy (a) Japanese (rice) bowl. One day I bought one, to carry (in my hand and eat, something that) Koreans (do not do). The Chinese (also carry their rice bowls). My mother raised heck with me and said, "Why? What's so good about that?"

So it carried on, my mother was very much against my sisters and brothers above me associating with Japanese or having anything to do with them. And even after I grew up, and was working, she was not too very keen about (my association with) Japanese. However, (her attitude changed). (When) I was working at Ford Island, (my Chinese girlfriend) married a navy chief who was a Caucasian. We also had a very close Korean friend who married a Caucasian chief in the navy. They were so nice. (As) my mother got to know them, she told me, "You know, I guess it really doesn't matter what nationality you are because you can have a rotten (Korean)."

And another thing that really convinced me that she changed her mind was that for a long time when the rice cookers first came out, I bought one. I made the rice (and liked it very much) because (you don't have) burnt rice on the bottom. Whenever we had that brown rice at the bottom, (we had to) boil (it and get it off the bottom of the pot). On a cold day it's okay, you can eat the rice and the hot water. But (on) ordinary summer (days), nobody likes to eat that and eventually, if (my mother didn't) eat it, it (went) into the (garbage). So when I bought that, she snickered and said, "Oh, it's Japanese-made."

Anyway, when I make rice, I use that, and when she makes rice, she uses the pot. One day, (I

told her), "Why don't you learn how (to use this rice cooker)? It's so easy instead of having to watch the pot (on the stove)."

She said, "What's so hard about that?"

(Finally) one day, (a) long time later, she said, "I notice (that) we never have any burnt rice (on the bottom, so) we never throw away (any rice now)." (At that time the thinking was to eat everything—we were told), "The children in Korea are starving (so don't waste any rice). Otherwise you're gonna go to hell and God will punish you."

So one day she tells me,"Maybe I'll learn how to make the rice (in the cooker)."

And I said, "Great," to myself. So I taught her how and ever since then she (made) rice (in the cooker and I never heard her say anything about Japanese). Now, her grandchildren married Japanese. So we have a *Haole* (and a Chinese grand)daughter-in-law, (three) Japanese (grand)son-in-laws, (and) one Thai (grandson-in-law). My son-in-law is English, Irish, Hawaiian (and) Chinese. She saw them (all) married, (and by then had already changed her mind about non-Koreans). So we got along very well. She, in her older years found that, everybody is equal. You find good and bad in every culture.

MK: But initially she came with her own . . .

AC: Ideas.

MK: . . . I guess prejudices about . . .

AC: Yeah.

MK: . . . Japanese . . .

AC: Japanese.

MK: . . . because of what she had experienced . . .

AC: Right.

MK: . . . in Korea, and as the years went by she changed her attitude. And in a kind of related way, I know that she came with her prejudices, she came with her medical knowledge, her Korean folk medicine. She came with that. And I think last time you told me that because she was older than many of the other Korean women that came at that time, she also was able to teach the other Korean women how to cook and . . .

AC: (Yes), that's right.

MK: Can you talk about that?

AC: Many of the Korean women out here were picture brides, and they came in the 1920s, I guess the last boatload was 1924. So she was looked up to by these ladies. And all throughout my life, I noticed that my mother (always received) very good comments. She was very straightforward and she was a good woman. And so all of these ladies who knew her (were)

very much (impressed with her)—she was a likable person. And then, there were some students that lived at [the Korean Christian Institute]---see, when Dr. Syngman Rhee came out here, he had, back in the nineteen, what, '15, '16, '17, '18—I guess during that time, they were all Methodists. That's right, my mother came here and they had gone to the Korean church, which was the Methodist Korean church [*now known as Christ United Methodist Church*]. But you know, Methodists have a headquarters. And so at that time, I believe Dr. Syngman Rhee wanted to---I don't know what his real reason was, but he wanted to do something, I think, have only Koreans or a Korean church. But anyway, it turned out that he had a following and they came out of the Methodist church, and then they had their own Korean Christian Congregational Church. And we had---he had followers. And then at that same period of time, he had a school, the Korean Christian Institute for the laborers, (so that) all the Koreans who were out here (would) have a school for their children. I think that's how he put it. We had many, many children at that time attend that school. And then, we had a good friend whose daughter was in that school, and then she also had her friends. They would [*all*] come over to my mother's home sort of regularly (to) have lunch or dinner. That's how I know that they (thought) very highly of my mother.

Those were the things and my mother spent a lot of time at church with the other ladies, doing relief work, work for the church also. They had two societies at church, it's called the Ladies' Aid Society, which is connected to the church. And then they have the Women's Relief Society, which is sort of like a charitable society. And so she belonged to those two and she organized a club. They called that the *Hyop Tong Hoe*. She got (her friends) together and then they said, "When we die, we want to make sure that we have our friends come over (to the funeral)."

And then so they had a club that they formed—I think they paid twenty-five cents a month. Eventually it came up to a dollar. And then what they would do is every time someone died, they would all come to the funeral. They had their own ribbons to identify the members, and they would pay a dollar, I think. And then, that money plus whatever they decided on—maybe a twenty-five dollar wreath. At that time, I guess, it was twenty-five dollars, right, they would (order) a wreath with their name on (it). Up until the time she died that club was still going strong, *Hyop Tong Hoe,* and she was one of the founders, yeah.

MK: You know, those two relief or aid groups that she was a member of, at what times would they go into action? The other club helped at funerals. How about . . .

AC: Oh, this was like when they had some kind of relief drive for Korea, clothing drive for Korea, and things like that. And I believe when they had disasters, they would help. And at one time, (during) some kind of disaster they were helping fold bandages, but not as members of the Red Cross. I guess they (Red Cross) must have solicited their help.

MK: You know, at the time that, say, your dad passed away, in 1935, and your mother was left a widow with a number of children, were there any Korean mutual aid groups that came to help her out? A church group, or anything that was set up that—in the Korean community—that could help someone like your mother?

AC: I don't think they had any kind of aid group that way. So my mother was always joining that *tanomoshi*[*-ko*]. (She'd borrow a sum of money), then she'd (re)pay. That's how (she managed).

MK: So at the time that your . . .

AC: And she would probably borrow. I remember there was this lady, her husband was in business and she had some money. And so I guess my mother would borrow from her and then pay her. I remember that.

MK: So when your dad passed away, there was no, say, a women's auxiliary group connected with the church that would [*help the family*] . . .

AC: I don't know. Well, I don't know whether they would have. But you know, at that time when my dad passed away, remember now, (many) Koreans were living in that area, the Palama area. Many, many, just all over. On King Street they had the [*dry*] cleaning shop. They had a furniture store. Our friend was an owner of a furniture store. They had all kinds of people living in that area: on Pua Lane, down below, up side, way over across Vineyard Street, then on Kanoa Street, and where St. Luke's Church used to be. Right opposite St. Luke's Church, they used to have cottages over there. Koreans used to live there and Koreans used to live behind Kanoa Street, behind the corner. There's an open market over there now. At the corner of the open market, on the *mauka* side, was where the Korean church used to be. At the corner of Kanoa Street and Pua Lane, (there) used to be a dormitory, single men's apartment. And it was right at the corner, and then they had the church, and then houses along behind there were Korean. So Koreans all over. Across the street of our place was a two-story building owned by a Chinese family.

And then I remember one time they had a fire up there and a Korean family also lived there and the man died, eventually as a result of the fire. (His) son was a U.S. post office worker. And in fact, (the man) was married to a Hawaiian woman, and their daughter used to work at C. S. Wo, I believe, as one of the designers, or interior decorator(s). I remember that family.

And so, when there was death, Koreans just rally around. We had friends---many of those people did not go to our church. In fact, we were one of the only ones going to Korean Christian [*Church*]. Many of them living there attended St. Luke's Korean church.

MK: And that's Episcopal, right?

AC: Episcopalian, right. And now they're located on Judd Street. Many of those people there are Episcopalian, and I still remember, I meet their children now and then. And during that time, prewar days, when you had (a) funeral, it was (from) six o'clock in the evening, or seven, all night at the mortuary. And the mortuary we were familiar with was Borthwick Mortuary, located on Nu`uanu [*Avenue*]. Corner of Nu`uanu and, I guess, (School) Street or something. At that time was very strict. We did not (serve) meat. They would have dinner, I mean, food to eat all night. And then I remember they had a little room, and whoever stayed overnight, they would go over there and they'd play *hwat'u*, you know, that Japanese cards [*hanafuda*]? They'd play (cards) and then the ladies in the kitchen would cook. They would cook only vegetarian. And then the next morning, you would have the funeral in the afternoon, I think. They must have lunch there too, if I recall. When the war broke out, then the evening overnight [*wake*] stopped, and then only from six to nine, or in the morning. But now, nobody does that (nighttime) hardly ever. I do remember sometimes they do, but now it's either six to nine (in the evening) and burial next day, private. Or now it's more popular now, it's in the morning. Open at nine (in the morning) and then funeral services at eleven, or after lunch. They cater the food during lunch hour. You know, nobody cooks and catering includes all kinds of food now, meat and everything. The tradition is gone of those periods.

MK: You know, you mentioned that in that area in Palama, Liliha, that place, you had lot of Koreans. And you were in the minority, you were going to the Korean Christian Church, others were going to the Methodist church and St. Luke's . . .

AC: Or St. Luke's, right.

MK: . . . Episcopal Church. How did religious differences affect you and your family? You know, living in that community.

AC: Well, I guess there was nothing serious. I mean, they did their own thing. They go to this morning, five o'clock service. My mother went to church every Sunday as long as she could. Even after she became ninety, she was still going (to church).

She went to church, (but) she could hardly sing. She was not a singer, but she would come home and then she would kind of sing but she couldn't carry a tune very well.

During their prewar days especially, we had this Korean Christian Church being built. I guess it was around 1938, '39, or something like that, '37. But anyway, the church ladies did a lot of work by selling the *taegu*, *kim chee*, and all kinds of things, including *mochi*. They used to have this family up in Pohaku (Street), the Lees, that owned one of these machines to make *mochi*, the candlestick *mochi* for soup. This candlestick *mochi* is usually used during the holidays, in Christmas and New Year's. And at that time, we didn't have this commercial *mochi*. There was no commercial *mochi* shops for Koreans. You had the Japanese *mochi* (stores). But the only place you could make *mochi* was up at this Korean place. So the ladies would arrange to rent that place, and they'd make *mochi* and sell. But my father had a tree stump, (a) hardwood, and he had carved the inside and made this—what do you call that thing you pound it in?

MK: The mortar?

AC: (Yes.) Mortar. He made that and he also had made that mallet, the long-nosed thing with that handle. My two brothers used to be the ones to pound that. My mother was very good at that, and she was known for her *mochi*. Incidentally, I'll be demonstrating my *mochi* this Saturday and my *koch'ujang*. I learned how to do that, actually, by watching when she was doing that, they pound. They soak the rice overnight and they pound the *mochi*. And then they have a very fine sieve. There's a special sieve for that. Then they make a powder. I watched her during the war. After the war, nobody did anything. (After the war), I noticed that the Japanese had this rice flour (and) *mochiko* in little packets, ten ounces. So I told my mother, “Oh, let's make *mochi* (with the *mochiko*) one day.”

After the war we moved and we never took (the *mochi*-pounding mortar). It rotted because many years we didn't do anything. So my mother said, “Okay, let's try.”

So I bought the (rice) flour. We tried (and) failed. We (went) through the procedure again, (the mochi) still crumbled. So the next time, I told her, “Well, let's mix the *mochiko* in it.”

So we tried it, it still crumbled. I said, “Let's put a little sugar.” It still crumbled.

So eventually I thought about it and then I told my mother I'm going to use hot water and she

flipped. She said, “You can't use hot water.”

And then so I said, “Well, I'm going to use this,” and it was a biscuit cutter. So I used the biscuit cutter and (cut the rice flour and *mochiko* mixture into the) size of peas. Then I put sugar in there with the water. But, boy, that thing got sticky. So that failed. So finally I said, “Well, maybe the sugar is sticky.”

So I did everything with the hot water and flours. Then I put the sugar in after I had put the hot water in and it turned out. So eventually after many, many failures, I came up with a recipe. So I (make the *mochi*) often now, whenever we have church functions, or elsewhere. And so I demonstrated that at the 75th celebration of the (Korean) immigrants' (first arrival in Hawai`i), at Blaisdell [*Center*]. And then I went to Wahiaw_ Church. (Later) they asked me to do it at our church. So I did it at our church and I went to Wahiaw_ Christian Church, and the Methodists wanted to know also. So I went there, and since then I had another demonstration at church. So this Saturday, I'll be demonstrating the *ddo_k* making. And I also made my own *koch'ujang* which was a formula unheard of. In the Korean style, you use that malt or whatever, that thing that sprouts. They use that as the . . .

MK: Starter?

AC: . . . starter, (yes). When my mother was living with us, normally I would make hot rice every day out of respect, unless she said, “Oh, well, let's eat the leftover.” But I do the hot rice, so sometimes we have a little bowl here and a little bowl there (in the refrigerator).

One day, when I took (the rice) out, I realized I had a mixing bowl full. So I told my mother, “Let's make *koch'ujang*.”

She said, “How can you make *koch'ujang* with that?” You know, it's not the right rice to begin with, you have to use the *mochi* rice because *mochi* dissolves, but this rice does not. She said, “You can't do that.”

So I said, “Well, I hear some people use *miso* and *koch'ukaru*,” you know, that pepper (powdered chili), “and just mix it and use that as *koch'ujang*.”

So I used *miso* (as the starter), it's the Japanese *miso*, the rice, the red chili pepper, and I put some salt so that it wouldn't get rancid. And I said, “I'm going to put honey.”

(Telephone rings.)

AC: And lo and behold, it worked. Excuse me.

MK: I'm going to end right here.

END OF INTERVIEW